

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER.

NOTES ON NEW BOOKS.

JACQUELINE PASCAL, or, a *Glance of Convent Life at Port Royal*. From the French of M. Victor Cousin, M. Prosper Fagure, M. Vinet, and other sources. Translated by H. N., with an Introduction by W. R. Williams, D.D. New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1854.

The more we read about the Port Royalists the more we are persuaded that Royer-Collard, the distinguished French doctrinaire and philosopher, was right when he said that not to know Port Royal and its fortunes is not to know the history of humanity. And yet, as Mr. Macaulay remarks that he has read histories of England which, in treating on the events of the eighteenth century in the United Kingdom, make no mention whatever of the rise of Methodism under the labors of Wesley and Whitfield, so also we have seen histories of France which, in reciting the story of the seventeenth century, have left in oblivion the annals of a society whose illustrious names form part to that century its highest glory, and whose works compose its surest claim to the grateful remembrance of all succeeding times. For the society of Port Royal numbered among its patrons such men as Arnauld, Pascal, Tillemont, Nicole, Lemaître, St. Cyran, De Sacy, Racine, Boileau, Quésnel—names which are familiar to the most cursory reader of the literary and ecclesiastical history which celebrates the Augustan age of France. Tillemont, by his erudite disquisitions on the civil law, has extorted the praises of the English Gibbon; Nicole wrote so beautifully on Christian morals that Madame de Sévigné said of his book at the time of its appearance that "it contained 'not a word too much or too little,' so nicely did it show 'the human heart and how all persons see themselves there, whether philosophers or peasants, Molinists or Jansenists.'" Lemaître was long the acknowledged head of the French bar, astounding the judges by his surpassing eloquence and swaying the minds of men as with an enchanter's wand. De Sacy has bequeathed to the French the most perfect version of the New Testament that can be found in their own tongue, or, as Sir James Stephen thinks, in any other. Lancelot wrote the "Port Royal Grammar," which, until the present century, obtained the highest place in the schools of Europe. St. Cyran was accustomed to be introduced by Richelieu "as the most learned man on the continent;" a tribute in which there was as much of truth as flattery. Arnauld was the most doughty and invincible controversialist as well as the most prolific author of his age, the terror of the Jesuits, and yet the "defender of the faith." Of Pascal, or Racine, or Boileau we need not speak, for their fame is as universal as this is illustrious.

Port Royal des Champs was a nunnery founded by Mathilde de Garlande, wife of Matthieu de Marli, on the eve of her husband's departure to the conquest of the Holy Sepulchre. It stood in a pleasant valley on the road from Versailles to Chevreuse, at the distance of not more than six miles from Paris. Of this nunnery the traveller now finds no remnant save a solitary Gothic arch, and, as some say, a number of trees so planted as to indicate the nave and transept of the church that was once attached to the monastery. Port Royal belonged to the Reformed Cistercian branch of the Benedictine order, and at the time of its foundation was limited to the reception of twelve ladies. But, during the lapse of four centuries, it had steadily increased in wealth and dignity, if not proportionally in sanctity, until, in the times of Henry the Fourth, we find the noblest of his court equester for his portentious daughter the rank of lady abbess at Port Royal. The dissolution of manners which prevailed during this period at Paris is supposed to have infused itself into the cloisters at Chevreuse, since, at a later and purer day, the old chronicles of the monastery sum up the sad derelictions of their predecessors by stating that the nuns were wont to wear gloves, masks, starched linen, and furbelows—to say nothing of the "robes à grandes manches"—just like the ladies at the Louvre; and, what was more deplorable still, allowed their hair to peep out from its monastic coiffure in the most becoming fashion.

M. Marion, the advocate general of Henry Quatre, asked and obtained of his royal master the *condolement* of the Abbey of Port Royal in behalf of his grand-daughter, Jacqueline Marie Angélique Arnauld, and that of St. Cyr for her sister Agnes; at the time the former was only eight years old, the latter but five. Forged certificates of the required age were, however, forwarded by their grandfather to Rome, and a Papal bull soon confirmed the nomination of the juvenile candidates, and installed them over their respective monasteries. By the death of her predecessor in the line of abbatical office, the sprightly Jacqueline, at the age of eleven, was promoted to the dignity of abbess, and her sister Agnes, soon afterwards renouncing the Abbey of St. Cyr, came to enroll herself among the nuns at Port Royal, where she became the Mistress of the Novices before she had ended her own novitiate. The official precocity of the girls was surprising.

As already intimated, the rigor and austerity of the Benedictine order had been brought at this period into a state of relaxation such as might have been expected from the profligacy that reigned in the outer world. Port Royal partook in the general contagion. The Mere Angélique (such was the title she assumed on her promotion to the rank of abbess) preferred the latest romance to her breviary, and even sighed for the pomps and vanities of a world which she had solemnly renounced, or rather which her grandfather had renounced for her before her young heart had learned to mock itself by the illusions of fashionable folly. While the young abbess was in this state of mind it happened that a Father Basil, a Capuchin friar, passed by the way of Port Royal, and sought and obtained permission to preach before the nuns. His sermon was the turning-point in the Mere Angélique's history, and from that time forth she resolved to live a life of holy consecration to the duties of her "vocation." The rule of the Cistercians was henceforth reinstated in all its ancient rigor; the abbey walls were rebuilt, to exclude the gaze as well as the intrusion of the profane world without; linen was displaced by coarse woollens, as the more befitting attire for those who would mortify the flesh; *celices* and pricking girdles were ordered to be worn; parents were forbidden any longer to see their daughters or brothers there sisters, the Mere Angélique herself taking the initiative in complying with this stern requisition of monastic discipline. No change so sudden might have been deemed the product of mere emotion or impulse had it not been verified as genuine by the uniform tenor of her whole after life. We can almost as much question the conversion of an Apostle Paul as of a Mere Angélique.

In consequence of her fame as a reformer, the Abbess Angélique was called to the management of other religious houses; among them was the Abbey of Maubuisson, under the rule of Madame d'Étrées, a sister of the *la belle Gabrielle*, the "Fair Rosamond" of the French King Henry. This splendid mansion, with its dependent baronies, was said to resemble the "palace and gardens of Armida" rather than a retreat sacred to penitence and prayer. Its reputed luxuries and debaucheries scandalized even the Court; a visitation of the house was accordingly appointed. The exemplary Abbess, Mde. d'Étrées, imprisoned the commissioners and subjected them for many days to a wholesome diet of bread and water. A second delegation, consisting of a priest and his attendants, were next sent to reside as permanent superintendents of the abbey, but the ladies of the house impatiently locked them up in a tower, doled out to them a daily stint of the same fare as that with which they had regaled the former party of inquisitors, and, in addition, treated them each morning to a sound lapping, (*cliquettes*). In fine, these terminant nuns, whom the civil power failed to reduce to subjection, were besieged by a band of archers; yet still the versatile abbess invented new means of defence. After a siege of two days the sacred enclosures of the monastery were forced; and the worthy abbess, taking counsel of despair, determined to put forth a final effort, and to stake the issue of the contest on an expedient which

none but her own fertile genius could have devised: she went to bed, or, as some accounts state, ensconced herself in her wardrobe, after having significantly hung her gown and petticoat on the outside. Here she held her persecutors at bay. "A more embarrassing manoeuvre," says Sir James Stephen, "was never executed by Turpin or Condé. The siege was turned into a blockade. Hour after hour elapsed; night succeeded to day, and day to night; but still the abbess was recumbent—unapproachable, unapproachable. Driven thus to choose between a ludicrous defeat and a more scandalous, what Frenchman could longer hesitate? Bed, blankets, abbess, and all were raised on the profane shoulders of the archers, lifted into a carriage, and most appropriately turned over to the keeping of the 'fille penitente' of Paris." Such is a glimpse of convent life at Maubuisson.

Madame d'Étrées being, however, by dint of arms at last disposed, the Mere Angélique was installed in her stead, and straightway commenced her work of reform; and surely her talents in this line were never more needed than here. Passing by the desperate attempt of Mde. d'Étrées to regain her lost dominion at Maubuisson, let us skip over an interval of five years. At the end of this time we find the Mere Angélique once more presiding over the monastery of Port Royal, the seat of her earliest labors, and destined to be the scene of her life's latest struggles. But the lack of accommodation for so many persons as looked to the convent, together with the dampness of the marshes around Port Royal, rendering it injurious to the health of the inmates, induced the Mere Angélique to remove her nunnery to a large house in the Faubourg St. Jacques, Paris, which her mother generously purchased and fitted up as a convent. This change of location it was which impressed upon the Port Royalists the color and complexion of their whole future destiny; for it was this which identified their fortunes with the interests of "Jansenism." While conducting the convent of "Port Royal de Paris," as the monastery was now termed, the Mere Angélique was introduced to the society and influence of Jean Baptiste du Vergier de Hauranne, or St. Cyran, as he is more familiarly known, from an abbey to which he was at one time appointed. St. Cyran was the founder of "Jansenism" in France. The religious system so called received its name from Cornelius Jansen, a native of Holland, with whom St. Cyran had met at Bayonne, where they both resided for the space of six years in the joint study of theology, and especially of the writings of St. Augustine. The theological views which they adopted and inculcated were similar to those which we denominated at the present day Calvinistic, though with some important variations from the creed of the great Geneva reformer. After a study of twenty years Jansen had completed a work entitled the "*Augustinus*," designed to embody Christian doctrine as taught in its primitive purity by St. Augustine. St. Cyran, having been the collaborator of Jansen in the composition of this treatise, became very naturally the defender and expounder of its tenets in France, for Jansen himself had returned to his native country. St. Cyran subsequently took up his residence at Port Royal des Champs, the deserted monastery of the Mere Angélique, and here gradually drew about him a society of voluntary recluses, bound by no monastic vow and subject to no monastic rule, but self-exiled from the world and devoted to "their own spiritual improvement and to the instruction of mankind."

Among the men thus attracted by the example and the teachings of St. Cyran were Lancelot, the grammarian, Lemaître, the orator, De Sericourt, the warrior, De Sacy, the translator, Fontaine, the scholar, "the great Arnauld," and Pascal, the philosopher, the genius, and the sage. And though the envy and malice of Richelieu consigned him to the donjon of Vincennes, yet still St. Cyran sent forth his messages of consolation and advice to the recluses at Port Royal des Champs, and to the Abbess of Port Royal de Paris; and it was in compliance with his pressing instances that the Mere Angélique again transferred the seat of her convent to the Valley of Chevreuse. What thought it endangered the lives of the conventual sisterhood? "Is it not as well," asked St. Cyran, "to serve God in an hospital as in a church? Are any prayers more acceptable than those of the afflicted?" The advice of St. Cyran prevailed, and in 1648 the Mere Angélique, accompanied by a dozen or more nuns, repaired again to Port Royal des Champs. And here we cannot resist our inclination to quote from the sprightly narrative of Sir James Stephen the following description of the labors of the Port Royalists in their two distinct but allied sections, the monastery proper and the voluntary association of the disciples of St. Cyran at Les Granges, a farm house near the abbey:

"Bound by no monastic vows, the men addressed themselves to such employments as each was supposed best qualified to fill. Schools for the instruction of youth in every branch of literature and science were kept by Lancelot, Nicole, Fontaine, and De Lacy. Some labored at translations of the Fathers and other works of piety. Arnauld applied his ceaseless toils in logic, geometry, metaphysics, and theological debate. Physicians of high celebrity exercised their art in all the neighboring villages. "Lemaître and other eminent lawyers addressed themselves to the work of arbitrating in all the dissensions of the village. There were to be seen gentlemen working assiduously as vine-dressers, officers making shoes, nobles sowing timber and repairing windows; a society held together by no vows; governed by no corporate laws; subject to no common superior; pursuing no joint designs; yet all living in unbroken harmony, all following their respective callings; silent, grave, abstracted, self-deficient by fastings, watchings, and humiliations—a body of penitents on their painful progress through a world which they had resolved at once to serve and to avoid. "The nuns employed themselves in the education of children, the rich and the poor, in almsgiving, and in other works of mercy. Their renunciation of secular cares was combined (no common alliance) with an entire superiority to all secular interests."

The connexion of "the great Arnauld" and of the Abbé de St. Cyran with the monastery of Port Royal had long caused the Jesuits to regard the institution with jealousy and disfavour; for towards these, its most prominent patrons, the disciples of Loyola had no reason to be particularly amiable, except in conformity to the precept of Scripture which requires us to love our enemies. For all of the Arnauld name the Jesuits entertained a hereditary hatred, founded perhaps upon a celebrated philippic delivered by Anthony Arnauld (the father of Anthony Arnauld, Doctor of the Sorbonne, and commonly called "the great") against the order in France, an eloquent diatribe which long had a great retentiveness throughout Europe, and which in the after controversy between Jesuits and Jansenists was called "the original sin of the Arnaulds." Forty sharp pens, said the Jesuits, are at work against us in the farm-house at Port Royal, and all of them are pointed by Anthony Arnauld.

At first they accused the Port Royalists of despising the Eucharist, using no holy water or images in their churches, and praying neither to saint nor virgin. But these slanders were too palpably false to need refutation. The next onset was more skillfully managed. One of the Jesuit order, a Father Cornet, drew up five theological propositions which purported to be derived from the *Augustinus* of Jansen, and denounced them to the Holy See as heretical opinions taught by St. Cyran and Arnauld. The propositions were condemned and anathematized by the Pope. But Arnauld, without essaying to defend the propositions themselves, denied that they were found in the work of Jansen. The Jesuits re-affirmed that they were, and the vexed question being submitted to a committee of doctors selected by Mazarin, the King's Minister, and Annat, the King's Confessor, it was decided in favor of the Jesuits. A papal bull confirmed the sentence, and an edict was issued requiring all ecclesiastics and religious houses to subscribe to the verity of the finding. Arnauld and the Port Royalists protested. And hence arose the distinction between the Pope's infallibility touching matters of faith and matters of fact, the question of *droit* and *fait*. Arnauld and his associates did not contest the Pope's right (*droit*) to condemn any doctrine as heretical; but they denied the fact (*fait*) that the

historical accuracy perhaps demands, though it is not essential to the continuity of our narrative, that we should mention the change in the jurisdiction of Port Royal from the Cistercian order to the care of the Archbishop of Paris. This occurred in 1627. In 1629 the Mere Angélique ceased to be abbess, and was succeeded by General d'Étrées, who died in 1630, after which it was held six years by Sister Agnes, who in 1642 again gave place to Angélique.

consecrated propositions could be found in the *Augustinus*. But Anne of Austria, a mere tool in the hands of Mazarin, was little disposed to heed such nice discriminations, and accordingly commissioned her lieutenants to break up the nursery of heresy, as it was represented, at Port Royal des Champs.

How this consummation was arrested, on the eve of its accomplishment, by the miracle of the "Sacred Thorn," we have not time fully to narrate. Suffice it to say, a miracle was wrought on the person of Pascal's niece, by which she was instantaneously cured of a disorder in the eyes—a *fistula lachrymalis*, of more than three years' standing. A veritable splinter from the Saviour's crown of thorns was the instrument of the miraculous cure, it having been applied to the eye by the *Seigneur Flavie* Passart, who had charge of the children in the nunnery. Whatever at this distant day, or as Protestants, we may think of the genuineness of this miracle, we cannot question its authenticity without impugning not only such men as Pascal and Arnauld, but the medical faculty of Paris as well, and the angered Jesuits who were thirsting to revenge themselves by the destruction of the Abbey. Anne of Austria was awed by this supernatural attestation of Heaven, and the Jesuits themselves stood abashed before the divine hand so visibly interposed to rescue the object of their hatred. The learned writer of the Introduction to the volume at the head of our columns hints that the miracle in question may be perhaps most plausibly explained by referring it to satanic agency, in this view coinciding, we believe, with the opinion of Sir James Stephen; a theory which to us, however, seems to involve difficulties much greater and more numerous than any it is competent to remove.

The respite obtained by the miracle of the Holy Thorn expired with the death of Mazarin and the authority of the Queen Mother, and the baffled Jesuits returned anew to the combat against Jansenism and its stronghold, Port Royal des Champs. No sooner was Louis XIV. fairly seated on the throne than a synod of the French clergy was convened to draw up an anti-Jansenist test to be taken by all ecclesiastics and communities. But again was Port Royal shielded from destruction, no longer, it is true, by the intervention of a miracle, but by the address and influence of Anne Genevieve, the Duchess de Longueville, and the heroine of the Fronde. Disgusted by a life of constant agitations, if we should not say pierced by the stings of a late but tender remorse, she had come in her declining years to find a refuge and a solitude within the convent walls of Port Royal. And here, though dead to the world, she still preserved enough of influence at the royal court to stay the impending blow which threatened the ruin of her last retreat, the home of her religious vows, and the chosen covert into which she had fled from the storms of a certainly not uneventful but still unhappy life.

For ten years Port Royal again enjoyed peace, but death, which came to surprise the penitent Duchess de Longueville at her vigils and macerations, deprived the abbey in her person of its guardian and its stay. The Jesuits, often foiled but not disheartened, again plotted the downfall of the stronghold of Jansenism. De Lacy and Tillemont and Pontchauteau were banished. Nicole and Arnauld fled to Holland. Postulant and pupils were expelled from the monastery, and the admission of novices was interdicted. The election of an abbess was next forbidden. The continuance of the conventual sisterhood was voted heresy. The sacraments of the church were soon withheld. The estates of the nunnery were confiscated, and finally by a papal bull the monastery was suppressed in 1709. The Cardinal de Noailles was the minister of all this vengeance. He rested not until he drove the ploughshare over the very foundations of the monastery, and had violated the graves in which the exiled nuns had laid their departed sisters. The wicked did not cease from troubling even in the tomb. "At length," says he, "from whom we have already quoted an eloquent passage, 'no trace remained of the fortress of Jansenism to offend the eyes of the Jesuits, or to perpetuate the memory of the illustrious dead with whom they had so long contended. The solitary Gothic arch, the water-mill, and the dove-cote rising from the banks of the pool, with the decayed towers and the farm-house on the slopes of the valley, are all that now attest that it was once the crowded abode of the wise, the learned, and the good. In that spot, however, may still be seen the winding brook, the verdant hills, and the quiet meadows, nature's indestructible monuments to the devout men and holy women who nurtured there affections which made them triumphantly live, and hopes which rendered them triumphantly die. Nor in her long roll of martyrs has history to record the names of any who suffered with greater content, or in a nobler cause; for their conflict was with the very church they most profoundly revered, and their cause was that of devotedness to sincerity and the abhorrence of falsehood.'"

We have thus rudely sketched the history and fortunes of the Port Royalists. In the volume before us we have a "glimpse of convent life," as seen in the experience of Jacqueline, sister of the illustrious Pascal. And we envy not the feelings of that man or woman, we care not whether Protestant or Catholic, who can rise from its perusal without a profound respect for her genius, a reverence for her piety, and an admiration for her remarkable character, with its sweetly blended traits of masculine strength and female tenderness.

For further information respecting the life and labors of the Port Royalist worthies, whether male or female, we refer the reader to the splendid article of Sir James Stephen, originally contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* in the year 1841, and since republished in a volume of "Miscellanies" by the same author. We must be pardoned, however, in saying that the article in question contains a few inaccuracies in its statements of facts; inaccuracies which, however, would be overlooked did they not contrast so oddly with the surpassing excellence that characterizes the essay as a whole.

"A NEEDLESS ALARM."—Under this head the *New Orleans Crescent* of the 28th ultimo alludes to the reports of the prevalence of cholera in that city, and says:

"There is unquestionably less of cholera here now than has usually, for years past, occurred about this season. The sultry damp weather which had of late followed a long period of warm weather produced a limited number of fatal cases, but only among those whose habits or whose imprudence had provoked a previous diarrhoea. The malady has had no epidemic character, and would have excited no attention but for the present sensitiveness to such things. Evidently the whole idea has arisen out of the arrival of the steamer *St. Louis*, which vessel falsely said to have many cases of cholera on board. But nothing has spread from her. Now, the late arrivals, with numerous cases, are every week happening in New York, without producing a sensation. We beg our fellow-citizens, therefore, to dismiss all uneasiness. The weather has now changed, and the few cases have almost ceased. A merciful God will not, we trust, lay his hand on us again for many a day. We have suffered enough."

The number of deaths from cholera for the week ending the 29th ultimo are officially reported at one hundred and twenty-nine.

SUSPENSION OF EMIGRATION.—The *New York Journal of Commerce* says that in consequence of the orders that have been sent out to bring no more emigrants to that port for the present, the emigration from Liverpool the coming winter will undoubtedly be greatly curtailed, probably two-thirds. The *Journal* further says:

"A remarkable circumstance is noticed in connexion with the disease prevailing on shipboard, which we have not heard spoken of, namely, that its peculiar malignity is only manifested upon reaching a certain latitude, the disordered atmosphere seeming to extend in veins or electric currents; so that sometimes all evidence of disease lurking in the atmosphere disappears long before reaching port."

A curious scene occurred in the Memphis Common Pleas Court, one day the past week. A man by the name of Smith was on trial for murder. Ten jurors had been empanelled, and then some technical objection was started by the counsel for the defence. The Judge asked if the counsel were going to quibble at that late hour about such a point; an evasive answer was given. The Judge required a direct answer, which they refused to give. He thereupon ordered a fine of fifty dollars to be entered against each of them. Still avoiding a direct answer, he ordered the sheriff to conduct them all to jail, and they were taken into custody and removed from the room. The question was not really determined at the adjournment of the Court. Messrs. Yerger, C. B. Frazer, Walter Coleman, J. S. Sullivan, and Gen. Ambler were the counsel in the case.

WASHINGTON.

"Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable."

MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1853.

THE MEETING OF CONGRESS.

We are permitted to hail, once again, the opening, under highly favorable auspices, of a new Congress, being the thirty-third from the commencement of the Government. Already a majority of members of the Senate and House of Representatives are known to be in the city, and will therefore be in attendance at the Capitol to-day.

We have said that the present Congress assembles under highly favorable auspices. At home, within our widely-extended borders, we have peace, plenty, and prosperity. Our General Government and the Governments of our one and thirty States are in full course of successful and unimpeded operation. With respect to interior government, generally thanks to a benignant Providence, not a cloud hangs over our head or lowers in the horizon. In the general aspect of affairs upon which we now congratulate our readers, we have no reference of course to our party divisions and contests, the periodical excitement of which is barely sufficient to prevent public sentiment from falling into a state of somnolency. These differences of opinion, and the free assertion of them, are not only natural to a free government, but even essential to its healthful existence. The alternative of unchecked freedom and expression of thought and lawful action could be no other than anarchy or despotism, and between the evils of either of these it would be difficult for a thoughtful lover of his country to discriminate.

With regard to the Foreign World, our relations are, on the whole, on as friendly and favorable a footing as we can ever reasonably calculate upon. Whatever time may bring forth, or ripen into maturity, of projects of change in these relations entertained by any considerable portions of our own people, or that may lie unveiled in the breasts of other Powers, it will be early enough to speak and act when they shall disclose themselves. So far as we are at present informed, it will be the true policy of Congress now, and indeed at all times, in respect to our foreign intercourse, to "let very well alone," or at least to look very closely into it before they undertake to legislate upon it.

The domestic questions which will present themselves to the present Congress will be of unusual interest, and particularly those relating to the great topics of the extension and due regulation of the lines of internal communication between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and those other lines which cross the country diagonally, connecting and uniting its remotest extremes from North to South. From present indications these are the topics, in connexion with those measures required for the protection of American interests invested in home culture, commerce, and manufactures, which will chiefly and necessarily engage the attention of the two Houses of Congress.

Upon these and correlative questions there will doubtless, as all experience teaches us, be opposing opinions, and possibly much contention; but we have an abiding confidence in the sound common sense of the People that, whatever may be the issue of them, it will in the main redound to the public welfare.

The close of the last Congress left a great mass of unfinished business in both Houses. To receive attention, all of it must be revived according to the usual parliamentary forms, and undergo the regular action of committees before being placed on the calendar of either House. Among the unfinished subjects several of more than ordinary importance may be worthy of notice. As first of these, we may refer to the bill which passed the Senate, and was on its engrossment in the House, entitled "An act to provide for the ascertainment and satisfaction of claims of American citizens for spoils committed by the French prior to the 31st of July, 1801." It will be remembered that a similar bill, appropriating five millions of dollars, was passed by both Houses of Congress in 1846, but was vetoed by President Polk, mainly on the ground that all the money then in the Treasury would be needed for the prosecution of the war with Mexico. The justice of the measure was not questioned by the President; and the fact that it has since, as well as repeatedly before, received the sanction of the Senate, creates a fair inference that this measure of long-delayed justice will be at last consummated.

A prominent topic of discussion at the last session will doubtless again occupy a portion of the time of Congress. The object is expressed in the Senate bill "authorizing the construction of a railroad and branches, for establishing a certain postal communication between the shores of the Pacific and Atlantic within the United States, for the protection and facilities of travel and commerce, and for the necessary defences of the country." This bill was brought in, on leave, by Mr. GWIN, and will probably be renewed with energy and zeal. The public expectation is awakened as to the probable course of the Administration in reference to this measure, especially since the commitment of two of the members of the Cabinet in its favor in the course of the past summer. It is believed that the national aid will be invoked for the scheme in the shape of a donation of portions of the public land; a method approved in the late message of the Governor of Alabama.

Numerous bills were pending to make grants of the public lands to aid in the construction of railroads through various States, and for the improvement of certain rivers; a few of the most important of which we may enumerate:

A bill to grant to the State of Missouri a right of way and a portion of the public lands for the purpose of aiding in making a railroad from St. Louis to the western limits of said State. [This may be considered a portion of the great railway to the Pacific.]

A bill granting to the State of Wisconsin a donation of public lands to aid in the construction of a railroad from the city of Milwaukee to the Mississippi river.

A bill to set apart and sell a portion of the public lands for the construction of certain railroads to the Pacific ocean.

A bill granting lands and the right of way to the States of Indiana and Illinois, in aid of the construction of a railroad from a point on the Ohio river opposite to Louisville, Kentucky, to a point opposite to St. Louis, in Missouri.

A bill granting the right of way and making a grant of land to the State of Louisiana for the construction of a railroad from opposite New Orleans, thence to the Sabine river.

A bill granting public lands to the States of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, in aid of the construction of a railroad from Cincinnati to St. Louis.

A bill granting to the State of Michigan the right of way and a donation of public land for the construction of a ship-canal around the Falls of St. Mary, in said State.

A bill granting the right of way to the State of Alabama and a portion of the public lands, to aid in the construction of a railroad from Memphis, in the State of Tennessee, to intersect the Charleston, Chattanooga, and Nashville Railroad.

A bill granting the right of way and making a grant of land to the State of Florida, in aid of the construction of a railroad from the waters of Pensacola Bay, in Florida, to Montgomery, in the State of Alabama.

There were probably twenty others of a similar character, involving a heavy amount of public lands, and each warmly pressed by its patrons. The quantity of land thus proposed to be granted would be little short of ten millions of acres.

Among the beneficent schemes proposed was one granting public lands to all the States of the Union for the purpose of establishing a permanent and efficient system of common schools; and one making a grant of lands to the several States of the Union for the relief and support of indigent insane persons. The latter bill is under the care of Senator SHIELDS; and the public cannot forget, in connexion with it, the philanthropic and greatly successful labors of Miss Dix, who has visited almost every State in the Union for the purpose of awakening a public interest in the condition of the insane. To her unflinching zeal may be attributed the construction of an Asylum for the Insane in the District of Columbia.

The Homestead bill will doubtless again be pressed by its friends. It has a winning title at least, if not an honest one: "An act to encourage agriculture, commerce, manufactures, and all other branches of industry, by granting to every man who is the head of a family and a citizen of the United States a homestead of one hundred and sixty acres of land out of the public domain, upon condition of occupancy and cultivation of the same for the period herein specified."

Senator BRODHEAD's bill for the payment of outstanding loan office and final settlement certificates, issued for money lent, or for services, or for supplies during the Revolutionary war, will probably be renewed by him, as well as his bill for extending the provisions of the several laws granting bounty lands to officers and soldiers of the several wars since the Revolution, giving to each person therein described a quantity not exceeding one hundred and sixty acres, including also persons engaged in the naval service. The latter subject has engrossed the attention of several public meetings, and a convention of old soldiers is to be held in Philadelphia on the 8th of January next in furtherance of the object.

Several matters pertaining to the interests of the District of Columbia fell through for want of time to give them due consideration. We may mention the joint resolution "for the location and construction of a bridge on a new site across the Potomac river, in accordance with the intentions of the late President Andrew Jackson;" a bill to prevent malicious mischief and protect property in the District of Columbia; a bill to authorize the business of banking, and to regulate the issuing and circulation of notes as money; and a bill to establish a library for young men in the District of Columbia.

Of the private bills, not less than one hundred and twelve in the Senate and one hundred and twenty in the House of Representatives were lost for want of time to consider them. How much of that heart-sickness which "hope deferred" usually produces followed the last hours of the session it would be impossible to estimate; but all these cases, if the parties interested be not worn out with waiting, must undergo anew the ordeal of investigation, and take their turn upon new calendars among the innumerable throng which each session generates.

How many thousands of claims never passed through the committees, or received a kindly glance from members, it might be useless to conjecture, were it not for the hope that the attention of Congress may be awakened, and some plan suggested to secure a patient and just consideration.

We were near omitting to notice a bill providing for a contract to carry the mail between some Southern port of the United States and the port of Para, on the river Amazon, and other ports. The readers of this paper are already in possession of the views of Lieut. MAURY upon the importance of commercial intercourse with the rich valley of the Amazon, and Congress may adopt some measure for obtaining for our merchants the free navigation of that great river, as well as the great tributaries of the La Plata.

The President's Message and the Reports of the Heads of Departments will doubtless present other and varied topics of legislation; but as these will soon speak for themselves we shall not anticipate their contents.

There is one subject of inquiry, however, the response to which we shall look for with no small degree of interest. At the Executive session of the Senate, on the 4th April last, Mr. BRODHEAD, of Pennsylvania, introduced a resolution, which was passed, directing "the Secretary of the Treasury to procure, so far as practicable, and furnish the same to the Senate, the following information, viz: The aggregate amount of Federal, State, city, county, railroad, canal, and other corporation bonds, stocks, and other evidences of debt held in Europe and other foreign countries, on the 30th June, 1853, specifying separately, so far as the same can be ascertained, the amount of each of the above descriptions of bonds and stocks." According to Mr. BRODHEAD's estimate, there was then "a balance against the United States of \$64,000,000—towards the settlement of which we have the official record of the *exportation* about the *importations* of \$37,000,000 of gold and silver; and the remainder of \$27,000,000 has no doubt been liquidated by the remittance of Federal, State, and other stocks." And he thought the balance for the current year would not be less. Other gentlemen of intelligence and observation in such matters were of opinion that the true balance would be over seventy-seven millions of dollars. Mr. BRODHEAD further remarked that those most conversant with the subject estimate that our indebtedness to foreigners, principally to Europe, in the shape of Federal, State, city, county, railroad, canal, and other corporation bonds and stocks, was, in the aggregate, not less than \$300,000,000, which, at an interest of six per cent., would give an additional annual amount of \$18,000,000 to be provided for.

We shall indulge in no speculations upon the political topics likely to arise during the session. These must rapidly develop themselves. We can but express the hope that, as some of the principal Powers of the Old World are engaged in strife, our own rulers will not be unmindful of the admonition of the Father of the Country: "Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities." And how fervently should we all unite in the prayer of that great and good man, "that our union and brotherly affection may be perpetual; that our free Constitution may be sacredly maintained; that its administration in every department may be stamped with wisdom and virtue; that, in fine, the happiness of the people of these States, under the auspices of liberty, may be made complete, by so careful a preservation and so prudent a use of this blessing as will acquire to them the glory of recommending it to the applause, the affection, and the adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it."

THE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS.

We copy from the *Sentinel* of Sunday the subjoined account of the proceedings of the Democratic Caucus of Saturday night. The prompt transaction of the business of the caucus contradicted the anticipations of dissension and difficulty which it had been predicted would embarrass if not frustrate entirely the purpose of the meeting. Whatever elements of discord may exist in the party, there was no serious exhibition of them in the caucus; but there were many absentees, whether intentional or not arrived in the city, we do not know.

FROM THE SENTINEL.

DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS.—Agreeably to the call, the Democratic members of the House of Representatives convened in the hall of the House at six o'clock on Saturday evening, and organized by choosing Hon. EMMET B. OLDS, of Ohio, as chairman, and Hon. COLIN N. INGRAM, of Connecticut, and Hon. JOHN G. DAVIS, of Indiana, secretaries.

The rules of the last House were adopted as the rules of this meeting.

Hon. F. P. STANTON, of Tennessee, offered a series of resolutions, affirming the principles of the Baltimore platform, in favor of carrying out the principles of the late Inaugural, opposing all interference, by the Administration, in State politics, including an extract from Thos. Jefferson in point, &c.

On a point of order these resolutions were voted out. An appeal was taken, which was not sustained.

The meeting then proceeded to ballot for Speaker, with the following result:

First ballot: Linn Boyd 45; James L. Orr 35; David T. Disney 37; Thomas B. Boocock 1. Whole number 118.

Second ballot: Boyd 64; Orr 23; Disney 31. Whole number 118.

Hon. Linn Boyd, of Kentucky, was therefore declared to be nominated.

The meeting next proceeded to ballot for the remaining officers of the House in succession, with the following results:

John W. Forney was nominated for Clerk on the first ballot—the only opposing candidate being the Hon. R. M. Young.

Mr. Glosbrenner was nominated for Sergeant-at-Arms without opposition.

Mr. McKew was nominated for Doorkeeper on the second ballot.

Mr. Johnson was nominated for Postmaster without opposition.

It will therefore be perceived that all the officers of the last Congress were nominated.

Several of the members present in the city were not present at this meeting.

WORKING OF THE NEW STEAMBOAT LAW.—The steamboat inspectors of the port of Louisville, in their report made up to the 1st of November, bear the following testimony in relation to the beneficial operation